1:Redfield E-5 (1926-1927) 1930
NU37 Tepoztlan NU37



| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Santo Domingo..... | *Cacame* ["Toads"] | 103 |
| La Santísima..... | *Txicame* ["Ants"] | 621 |
| San Miguel..... | *Techihehicame* ["Lizards"] | 829 |
| Santa Cruz and San Sebastian..... | *Tepemaxtlame* ["Cacomixtles"]* | [825] |
| Los Reyes..... | *Metzalcuanime* ["Maguey worms"] | |
| San Pedro..... | *Tlacuatzitzin* ["Tlacuaches"]† | |

* The basserisk (*Bassariscus astutus*).
† The opossum (*Didelphys marsupialis*).

These names are used, somewhat humorously, to refer to the members of the *barrio* considered collectively. Thus, as the saint day of Santo Domingo, January 12, approaches, it will be said: "*Ye acitihuitz ilhuitl cacame*" ("Now comes the *fiesta* of the toads").

There are two explanations offered by the Tepoztecos for these names. The first explanation says that the animal named is one which is particularly common at the time when the *fiesta* of that *barrio* is held. Thus, the *fiesta* of La Santísima is in June when the *milpas* are plowed for sowing and many ants appear on the ground; that of Santa Cruz in May when the cacomixtles come down to eat the sapotes which are ripe at that time and falling to the ground; that of Los Reyes in January when the maguey is opened for pulque and the worms come to eat the exposed pulp. The other explanation, which is more common, declares that the names are descriptive of the characteristics of the *barrio* members. The people of La Santísima are called ants because there are so many of them; they run over the ground like ants and get into all sorts of affairs. Those of Santo Domingo are called

2:Lewis E-5 (1943-1948)1951 NU37 Tepoztlan NU37



243 [821] [492] [244] appearance of the new moon brings a better harvest. The rows of corn are 80 or 90 cm. apart, depending upon the fertility of the field. Yokes are therefore two standard sizes.

Some farmers mix their corn seed with beans: *frijol chino, pepita,* and *frijol colorado.* When this is done, no special number of seed is used. After the first cultivation, *frijol negro* or *bayo* may be planted between the corn hills.

In planting a field that has been prepared by the *dos arados* rather than by the *barbecho,* the plow is directed right through the middle of the old corn beds, and this is known as the *tercer arado,* completing the three plowings involved in the preparation and planting. Both in the newly broken ground and in the land that [407] has been in cultivation the preceding year, the *arado criollo* (wooden plow) is used in planting, and a piece of wood is inserted which acts as a double mouldboard and throws the earth to both sides. The amount of corn that is planted per day depends upon the type of corn and the speed of the oxen and driver. On the average, two men working with a team of oxen can plant eight to ten *cuartillos* of *maíz ancho* per day, and about five to six *cuartillos* of *maíz pepitillo.*

*First Cultivation:* Two or three cultivations are generally given to cornfields; these cultivations are known as *el primer mano* or *el primer beneficio, el segundo mano,* and *el tercer mano.*

The first cultivation of the corn is generally done twenty days after the planting when the corn shoots are still very small.[10] Again the steel plow and the short yoke is used, and the oxen walk between the furrows on either side of the corn bed. The plow is pulled to the right of the row of young corn, so that the earth is turned away from the corn. The driver walks to the left of the row and holds the plow with his right hand. Two *peones* are used in addition to the driver. The *peones* follow the plow, staying on the left side of the row of corn; they bend over the corn and with their hands they carefully push the earth around the young plants. The two *peones* work simultaneously about twenty feet apart and by-pass each other when they reach a section that has already been cultivated. The first cultivation of a plot of ten to twelve *cuartillos,* using two *peones,* takes on an average of two days.

[825] [824] Tepoztecans have an ingenious way of fighting ants which threaten the young corn. When the young shoots are about to appear, they take the leaves of a tree called *yamatl* (of the *amate* family), chop up the leaves, and sprinkle them over the rows of corn, and especially on ant nests. The ants prefer this leaf to corn, and Tepoztecans claim it makes them thin and eventually kills them. The leaf contains a white, milky substance so strong that it will peel the skin off a man's hand. Another tree whose leaves are used for the same purpose is *yoyohtli.*

*Second Cultivation:* The second cultivation begins about twenty days after the first cultivation is completed, generally in the last week of July. The process is very

[10] In fields which have gathered much water, Tepoztecans may plow in the furrows about eight days after planting, to spread the water. Such plowing is called *sobrenal.*

2;Lewis E-5 (1943-1948)1951 NU37 Tepoztlan NU37



The harvesting of corn, like all other operations in agriculture, is done on an individual family basis, with hired help if necessary. There is a minimum of labor exchange and cooperation. Our findings differ from those of Redfield. Redfield writes:

> The men always work in groups; the owner of the field has asked them to help him—it it is *cuatequitl*—and then when their fields are ripe he will help them harvest. These are social occasions. Each group has *la muleta*, "the little mule"—a bottle of alcohol hidden under a pile of corn. The preparation of their dinner is also done cooperatively at the house of the owner of the field, and this is a social occasion for the women. They carry the dinner to the fields for the men. The owner of the fields supplies the food and drink. But there the cooperative harvesting ends, for the removal of the grain is done separately in each individual house, each member of the family taking a hand.[10]

This account refers to a type of cooperation which does not now exist in Tepoztlán, and our informants did not remember its having existed in 1926 or even before the Revolution of 1910. Corn is shelled by both men and women. Women generally shell corn by hand in small quantities for daily use in the house and for small-scale trade. Large-scale shelling by the *carga* is generally done by the men who use an *elotero*, which is made of dry corncobs bound together in the form of a flat disc, over which the corn to be shelled is rubbed. Some use the black volcanic rock from the *texcal* for shelling. However, the corn selected for seed is shelled by hand by the men. Women of the two upper barrios of San Pedro and Los Reyes frequently shell corn on a large scale, whereas in the larger, center barrios, large-scale shelling is considered a man's work. In many cases *peones* are hired for this job. The shelled corn is stored in sacks, for the most part, although there are still a few of the old *cuescomatl*. (See Fig. 28.) Many families put the skeleton of a dog's head or a piece of *ocote* wood and lime in the sacks or the *cuescomatl* to protect the corn against spoilage. Formerly when *cuescomatls* were made, the priest would be called to bless them. There is a belief that when a death occurs, the corn in the house or on the house site will be more subject to the ravages of insects.

The loss of stored corn from insects is one of the serious problems faced by Tepoztecans. Many farmers complain that they lose a few *cargas* a year in this fashion. It is rare to find corn that lasts through to August without being seriously damaged by corn worms. Tepoztecans have still received little help with this problem from Mexican agronomists.

An old tradition persists in the village to the effect that the boa constrictor was formerly used to prevent stealing of corn from the cornfields and the granary. It is said that the snake was fed salt and *tequesquite* by the owner of the field, and that thereafter the snake would frighten all strangers by climbing up the cornstalk and making a whistling noise. These snakes were apparently tame and did not harm the owner, but would attack strangers. There seems to have been some

[10] Redfield, *Tepoztlán*, pp. 126-27.

2:Lewis E-5 (1943-1948) 1951 NU37 Tepoztlan NU37



251
343

Fig. 28. The *cuescomatl* for storing corn.

243
825
231

magical qualities associated with the boa constrictor, for it was believed that a man who had tamed one would always have a good yield in his milpa, and that the seed would not be subject to insects.

YIELD

The yield of corn varies a great deal from field to field and from year to year on the same field. Table 30 shows something of this range for specific fields of varying size.

243
433

TABLE 30. Estimates of Corn Yields in Plow Culture, 1944.

| Size of Milpa (Amount of Seed Planted in *Cuartillos*) | Yield in Ears of Corn by *Carga* | Yield in Shelled Corn by *Carga* |
|---|---|---|
| 14.0 | 30.0 | 20.0 |
| 22.0 | 34.0 | 23.0 |
| 8.0 | 15.0 | 10.0 |
| 6.0 | 7.5 | 5.0 |
| 7.5 | 13.5 | 9.0 |
| 10.0 | 7.5 | 5.0 |
| 12.0 | 9.0 | 6.0 |

Judging from these figures, we would get an average production of 9.6 *cargas* of shelled corn a hectare. However, it is possible to arrive at a much more useful

2:Lewis E-5 (1943-1948) 1951 NU37 Tepoztlan NU37



and brush are then built around the clearing to keep out stray animals that usually graze in these areas. Most *tlacolol* clearings are used two years in succession, and the work of clearing is considerably reduced the second year, although it generally takes 10 to 15 days to clear the milpa of weeds the second year.

***Planting:*** Planting in *tlacolol* begins in May, before the rains. This planting of the corn "dry," as Tepoztecans say, eliminates the danger of rodents getting at it. The corn used in *tlacolol* is a very hardy variety which sends roots out in all directions and which penetrates the rocky terrain. In planting, the *coa* or *coa* are used.

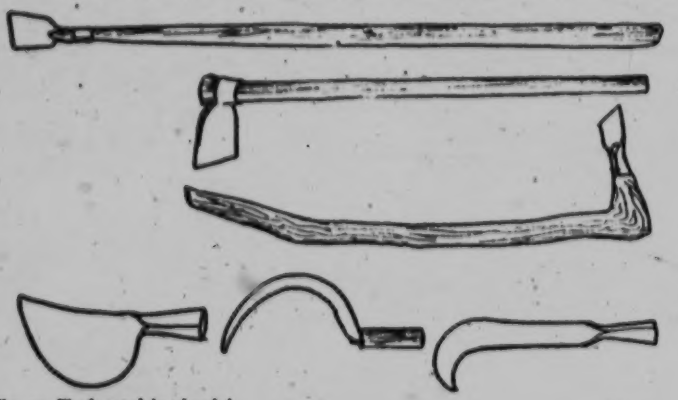

Fig. 29. Tools used in *tlacolol*.

A small hole about four to six inches deep is made wherever there is enough soil, and seeds are dropped in. Every interstitial space among the rocks is used. There are therefore no orderly rows in the planting. Beans and squash may be planted with the corn. A good worker can plant about one-half to three-quarters of a *cuartillo* a day; at this rate it would take about twenty man-days to plant the equivalent of one hectare of corn in *tlacolol*.

***Cultivation:*** Unlike plow culture, there is no cultivation in *tlacolol*, nor is the corn hilled. There is generally at least one weeding which is done about forty days after planting, when the corn is about two feet tall. Weeding is of two kinds. In one kind, the weeds are pulled out by hand, and this process is known as the *tlamaltequa*. This is the preferred process, and it is believed that yields are higher if it is done this way. However, this is difficult and time-consuming. One man can weed about three *cuartillos* per day in *tlacolol* of *texcal* and considerably less in *tlacolol* of *cerro*. If there is some delay on the part of the farmer and if the weeds have grown very tall by the time weeding is begun, the machete is used. (See Fig. 30.)

After the weeding, the milpa is left alone except for occasional visits to check the enclosures. Sometimes night visits will be made and firecrackers will be set

2:Lewis E-5 (1943-1948) 1951 NU37 Tepoztlan NU37



off at intervals all night to frighten away the rodents who have been getting after the corn. It is believed that a good fireworks session will keep them away for as long as two weeks.

*Harvest:* The harvest procedures are very similar to that of plow culture, except that most *tlacololeros* do not transport the fodder because the distances are too long, and it is considered uneconomical. Also most *tlacololeros* are poor and do not own a horse or burro and must hire them.

YIELD

Corn yields in newly cleared *tlacolol* fields are high, much higher than yields in plow culture. A normal yield on a newly cleared plot of *tlacolol* is about two *cargas* for each *cuartillo* of corn planted, and even three *cargas* are not unusual. But the yields decrease very markedly the second year, and most milpas are then abandoned for a new clearing because of the exhaustion of the slight top humus. The yields in *tlacolol* of *texcal* are somewhat higher than those in the *cerros*.

PRODUCTION TIME AND COST

An estimation of the time required in the production of corn in *tlacolol* must take into consideration both the *texcal* and the *cerro* plantings because of the variations within each. Table 36 compares the approximate number of man-days spent on each operation in both types of *tlacolol*.

TABLE 36. Estimated Time Spent in Production of Corn in *Tlacolol*, 1944.

| Operation | Man-Days Spent in *Tlacolol* Clearing | |
|---|---|---|
| | *Texcal* (10 *Cuartillos*) | *Cerro* (7 *Cuartillos*) |
| Clearing with machete and ax | 40 | 21 |
| Fencing with poles | 12 | 20 |
| Burning | 8 | 1 |
| Seeding with *coas* | 12 | 7 |
| Reseeding | 4 | 2 |
| Weeding by hand | 30 | 40 |
| Repairing fence | — | 40 |
| | 12 | 8 |
| Transporting corn | 10 | 15 |
| Shelling corn (15 *cargas*) | 15 | 7 |
| Total | 148 | 161 |

Despite the fact that our sample from the *cerro tlacolol* is a smaller plot, it took thirty-eight days to work it. Taking into consideration differences in the size of

2:Lewis E-5 (1943-1948)1951 NU37 Tepoztlan NU37



each of the barrios, as well as of some of the villages, are appealed to for rain. All the images are shut up in the parish church and are taken out in procession only in the afternoon when the sun is high, so that the images will feel the heat and notice the people's discomfort and sadness.

The saints with greater punishing powers are most assiduously worshipped. Saint Peter, of the barrio of San Pedro, is one of these. If there are not enough dancers at his feast day, he brings illness and misfortune to those who did not participate. Saint Peter, whose image is accompanied by a lion, is said to use this animal to frighten children into dancing for him and sometimes to appear to a father who has refused to permit his children to dance. It is also believed that if a person does not accept the office of *mayordomo* of the barrio of San Pedro, the lion will be sent to frighten him.

In their view of the saints, Tepoztecans reveal a tendency toward polytheism. This is indicated in the distinct attitudes toward the different images of the same saint. For example, the various local figures of Christ do not all have equal powers and are not all worshipped with equal fervor. The Christ of Ixcatepec is considered "very miraculous" and is called upon when there is great misfortune, such as extreme drought. He is rendered special homage by taking children, dressed in white tunics and wearing a crown of thorns and little thorn crosses on their backs, to the chapel of Ixcatepec to do penance.

The conception of the soul will be discussed in Chapter 19, "Old Age and Death." Here it should be noted that Tepoztecans distinguish between the body, the soul, and the spirit in the following way: "The body serves us for all our needs, to satisfy our necessities," and "The soul is that which gives life to the body and which will be punished in the other life according to our sins."

When a sin is committed, "The body is not at fault, it is the soul which rules." The spirit guards the body and soul from all that is bad, it is the Guardian Angel, "like a dove, like a pigeon, but invisible." The spirit is the companion of the soul and gives it strength. "That is why when a person is not brave, he has little spirit."

The question of sin does not overly concern Tepoztecans. Sin is inevitable, for "we are all sinners." It comes as "malice" enters a person and as innocence leaves, it comes with knowledge of life, with sexuality, with loss of virginity or purity. Malice can be delayed by keeping children in ignorance, but sooner or later they will become sinners. However, sinners are differentiated according to the degree of their sin, so that there are good sinners and bad sinners.

Sins, too, vary in degree. To the Tepoztecan, lying, adultery, and failure to attend Mass, to take communion, to confess, or to celebrate feast days are without importance as sins. The Ten Commandments and other fundamental rules of conduct imposed by the Catholic Church do not control the behavior of the Tepoztecan. For him the most important sins are stealing, killing, and practicing witchcraft. These acts are also differentiated in degree of gravity.

In the case of theft there is a wide range of permissible stealing which is not considered sinful. Thus, it is no sin to steal the roof tiles, or the hearthstones, or the

2:Lewis E-5 (1943-1948) 1951 NU37 Tepoztlan NU37



673 783 685 religious images of a temporarily abandoned house; "that is not a sin, that was abandoned, and it would be worse if it were lost." When someone's pig is run down by an automobile on the highway, the neighbors quickly come with knives and cut away the best portions of meat; this is no sin "since it is the custom of the people." But if one steals the growing corn, or corn after the harvest, or money —"that is really a great sin." Who does the stealing and from whom he steals also determine the degree of the sin. When cattle are stolen from a fellow villager it is a serious matter, cattle stolen by an outsider even more so, but cattle stolen by a Tepoztecan from a non-Tepoztecan is an act of minor importance. Thus, a young man whose father had died, and whose mother had lost most of their property to lawyers, supported himself by stealing cattle in places distant from Tepoztlán. He would go away for several weeks and return with cattle which he sold in the village or used in the fields. He is generally respected and considered *honrado*, although his actions are well known. "Since the poor fellow lost his inheritance, he sometimes goes out of Tepoztlán to struggle with the cattle of others."

While we were in the village, a highly respected person, prominent in state politics, was accused of having stolen a Zebu bull from a national experimental farm. The townspeople were impressed by his astuteness and did not take the attitude that he had done anything sinful or reprehensible.

673 783 [682] In regard to killing, Tepoztecans also distinguish between excusable and inexcusable murders. If "one is like an assassin who kills in cold blood and for mere pleasure," it is a sin. But if one kills for some purpose, it is another matter. To kill a mortal enemy without warning is not a sin since the killer "only got ahead of the dead man" and took advantage of his carelessness. The shooting of a thief or suspected thief on sight is another type of justified killing.

[683] Sorcery and witchcraft of any kind are great sins. Those who practice these "devil's arts" are certain to be punished after death, but they are left unmolested while they live and may be consulted by fellow villagers for cures or for advice in bewitching others.

[684] 562 Adultery is considered a sin only for women, but here again certain cases are excused. For example, "When a man demands good food at home and doesn't give the money to buy it, then he is forcing his wife to look for other men," and since he is the cause of the adultery or if he permits it, it is not a serious matter.

[683] 562 Calumny, criticism, and gossip are special sins of women, but drunkenness on the part of men is not considered a sin.

[273] 754 [825] Other beliefs held by Tepoztecans which are of interest are those of *Naguales*, *los aires*, omens, healers, witches, and sorcerers.

The *Nagual* is a person who has the power to change into an animal, such as a dog or pig. This ancient belief is widely known in Tepoztlán but is considered to be dying out. Informants alluded to *Naguales* as beings of the past, as no longer existing, or, at least, no longer wishing to show themselves. To become a *Nagual*, one must make a pact with the devil and learn certain prayers which allow a man to turn into an animal. Other prayers take away the powers of a *Nagual* and make

2:Lewis E-5 (1943-1948)1951 NU37 Tepoztlan NU37



754 him revert to human form. *Naguales* have the power to enter houses, even when doors are closed, can steal anything, and can quietly carry off girls by putting them into a deep sleep. To prevent thefts by *Naguales* a cross is marked on the bottom [789] of *metates* which then become too heavy for the *Nagual* to lift. Some *Naguales* [778] will steal girls for a sum of money. *Naguales* cannot be wounded by a knife or a gun, and it is impossible to hit them or throw stones at them because of a secret [776] power which defends them. Some people believe that El Tepozteco can turn himself into a *Nagual* and that he is their chief.

753 *Los aires* are mysterious forces, variously thought of as winds, spirits, or little 755 people who may cause sores, pimples, paralysis, and other illnesses. They are found in stream beds, ravines, in stagnant pools, and atop the highest hills. Tepoztecans [776] are careful to avoid *los aires* and not to offend them. Some old women still say certain Náhuatl phrases asking permission of *los aires* to take water from the stream. [312] Those who must pass by stagnant water after bathing in a *temascal* must drop some of the leaves, with which they dried themselves, into the pool in order to avoid [751] headaches, earaches, or watering of the eyes. To get rid of these afflictions one must be cleansed with salt and yarrow leaves which are afterward thrown into the middle of the street. Sometimes when a person eats beside a stream or near a ravine, he will be attacked by *los aires* and will have a headache and fever. The illness is treated by cleansing the person with herbs, which are then thrown into the stream [787] or ravine. If the sick person continues to have fever and dreams of canes, water, or food, it means that *los aires* struck him very hard and must be fed. *Mole*, tamales, [782] and fruit are prepared, and a special loaf of bread in the shape of a doll is ordered from the baker. The doll is decorated in red, and the meal, adorned with red crepe paper, is carried to the suspected stream and left there.[10]

242 *Los aires* are also believed to take refuge in anthills, and one who disturbs an anthill may suffer grave injury. For this reason no Tepoztecan dares open an ant- 825 hill to remove the queen ant, despite the fact that the local variety of ants is very [776] voracious and can destroy an entire cornfield. When a farmer discovers an anthill [753] in his field he will place food, such as mango leaves, around the hole, so that the ants will not eat the corn. The farmers sometimes place poisonous leaves at an anthill, but the ants soon learn not to eat them. Some of the more advanced farmers use chemical products including D.D.T. to kill the ants but even the most educated will not open an anthill.

753 Informants relate that not long ago a man, not of Tepoztlán, used to sell ant dung as fertilizer. He collected the material from anthills, but after six months of this work he fell ill, became badly crippled, and died. The same thing happened to the uncle of one of our informants; after opening an anthill he spent eight years in bed, crippled and inflamed from the effects of *los aires*.

784 Belief in good and bad omens continues in Tepoztlán. These beliefs are innu- 171

[10] In Redfield's account a real doll, with red cheeks and decorated with colored yarn, is used. The bread doll is more closely reminiscent of the dough images offered in propitiation in pre-Hispanic times.

2:Lewis E-5 (1943-1948) 1951 NU37 Tepoztlan NU37



merable and not unlike many reported in other studies of rural Mexican communities. Omens are seen in the cry of the opossum, the entry of a bat into the house, the howling of a dog at midnight, the rainbow, the death of a snake within the house, the songs of certain birds, an egg laid without a shell, an egg with a double yolk, and many more such phenomena. When an evil omen appears in a home, the entire family feels threatened, not knowing upon whom misfortune will fall, and for a time everyone takes extra precautions against accident. Sometimes a favorite saint is appealed to or a powerful *curandero* is sought out, but more often the family does nothing, and the sense of apprehension soon wears off.

Evil supernatural forces can be made to act or can be counteracted by sorcerers and witches who receive their power from the devil. Witches are thought to be most active on Tuesdays and Fridays, and some people take extra precautions to hide soiled clothing or not to accept gifts of food on those days. Several old women, particularly those who know a great deal of herbal lore, are thought to be witches. Aggressive or bold women may also be suspected, particularly women who are able to dominate their husbands. Such women are often thought to have bewitched their husbands with *ololoche*, a local herb. It is interesting to note that some of the young girls who have studied outside the village, and who live by urban standards, are also suspected of being witches by a large portion of the population. One such girl married a boy in the barrio of Los Reyes and was accused of being a witch by her mother-in-law on the ground that she refused to behave like a good daughter in-law and continued to see her former school friends.

Sorcery is used in courtship by unsuccessful suitors. The leg of a beetle is introduced into a drink to arouse the passions of an indifferent girl, or a powder made from skulls may be thrown on the palm of a woman's right hand or on her head, or into her food or drink. Foods which spoil too quickly are often believed to contain some powder meant for sorcery. A young Tepoztecan schoolteacher who received a gift of apples from a pupil was very much alarmed when she noted that the fruit rotted the very next day, and she suspected the child's family of trying to bewitch her. The most feared type of sorcery is that in which an image of the victim is fashioned out of his soiled clothing and pierced with a pin in the region of the heart or head to bring about his illness or death. To be doubly certain of success, the doll may be thrown into an anthill, so that *los aires* will also attack him.

Almost any unusual illness, but particularly swelling of the head or joints, may be attributed to sorcery by the local *curanderos*. A bewitched person usually leaves the village in the belief that he is no longer safe there and can be cured only away from the sorcerer. In such cases, Tepoztecans generally consult *curanderos* of wide repute in Yautepec or other towns and may spend several hundred pesos to undergo a cure. However, mild symptoms of sorcery or illness due to supernatural elements may be treated within the village by use of prayer, holy water, local herbs, ritual "cleansing," and by consulting certain local healers who go into a trance and converse with spirits to get a diagnosis and prescribe a cure.[11]

[11] This may be an element of African culture introduced into Tepoztlán by Negro slaves.

2:Lewis E-5 (1943-1948)1951 NU37 Tepoztlan NU37



876 "bad" boys. Other punishments are keeping a child in during the recreation hour; reporting bad behavior to the parents; giving out tasks, such as sweeping the classroom or yard, working in the garden, or writing an assigned sentence one hundred times. One girl was locked up in the henhouse for hitting other children. Parents generally approve of physical punishment in the school, and some think the school is now too lenient. In the past, it was common practice for parents who could not control their children at home to ask the teacher to discipline them. Children who are punished in school rarely tell their parents about it for fear that they will be punished a second time at home. Causes for punishment in school are inattentiveness, not knowing the lesson, fighting, and disobedience.

593 861 Other methods are also used to instill fear in the child. It is common for parents, particularly mothers, to threaten to desert their children, playing on the children's fear of becoming orphans. One mother said that she can get obedience from her children by telling them that she will stop eating and die so that they will have to live with a cruel stepmother. Children are told that if they are naughty they will be carried off by a stranger who will make soap out of them. Any passer-by, and recently the *gringo*, is used to frighten children in this way. In Tepoztlán, where children have occasion to see many tourists and outsiders coming and going, the fear of strangers has worn off, but in the nearby smaller villages children run to hide when an unfamiliar person appears in the streets.

[609] [184]

593 861 538 Many mothers and grandmothers tell children stories of owls and coyotes coming out at night to eat bad children and of bats and opossums that drink blood. Children who lie or disobey are told that they will turn into devils and burn in hell. They are told that badness is always punished in some unexpected way, such as being bitten by a mad dog, and that goodness is rewarded with good luck.

[825]

[152] The sound of a child crying appears to be a particular source of irritation in adults, especially in men, and children are frequently frightened into silence by threats of punishment. The story of Cahuasohuanton, a spirit who listens outside the walls of the house and imitates the child crying, is told to frighten crying children into silence. The story, translated from the Náhuatl, goes as follows:

[776]

[773] Once it happened that a child was crying a great deal, and his parents told him to lie down and go to sleep. He did not want to and sat near the hearth crying. His parents kept telling him to stop and then they fell asleep. After a while they awoke and heard a voice saying, "Cahuasohuanton yo ni concua," or "Cahuasohuanton has eaten him." The parents stood up and lighted a candle and there, near the hearth they saw the child dead, with his abdomen torn open and his intestines out and they knew that Cahuasohuanton had been there.

[776] Cahuasohuanton is a very fear-inspiring figure and children invariably cease crying when told that he is coming.

593 861 522 Frightening children is sometimes done for the amusement of adults. One informant remembered being very frightened as a child when his favorite uncle, after having told some ghost stories, suddenly told the child to run because a ghost was

2:Lewis E-5 (1943-1948)1951 NU37 Tepoztlan NU37



843 759 Care during pregnancy consists principally of massages of the abdomen by the midwife. The general purpose of the massage is to make the birth easier and to determine the position of the fetus. Midwives say they can change the position of the fetus if necessary by means of massage. Faith in the importance of massage is widespread, and there are few who do not take massages regularly. Newly married women often begin to take massages during the second or third month, but others do not begin until they feel movement. Since there is an additional charge of fifty [465] centavos (in 1943, the price ranged from twelve to twenty-five centavos) for each massage, there are many women who cannot afford to take them until the eighth or ninth month. Sometimes the husband will object to the number of massages his wife takes, and there may be quarrels. Massages are given every eight or fifteen days, depending upon when they are started and what the pregnant woman can afford. The patient lies down, with knees slightly bent, and the midwife gently massages the abdomen from right to left.[4] No oils or unguents are used.

787 843 Some say they can predict the sex of the baby by its position in the womb. If it is to one side, near the hip, it will be a boy; if it is in the middle, it will be a girl. If the fetus feels round, a girl is indicated; and if it feels elongated, it is a boy. If the mother looks sleepy and if her face is white, the child will be a boy, because boys are more "demanding" and make their mothers pale. If she is red-cheeked, the child will be a girl. However, some informants believe just the opposite and say that red cheeks indicate a boy because boys are more robust. If the mother becomes fatter all around, including the hips, it will be a girl; if she protrudes only in front, it will be a boy. It is also believed that a boy is born after nine months and a girl after eight months.

843 The midwife advises the pregnant woman concerning self-care. She is not to lift heavy objects but should continue to work because it makes the delivery easier. It is believed that a woman who is lazy and who sleeps often during pregnancy will have a difficult birth because the fetus adheres to the womb. Pregnant women [825] should not urinate where an animal has just urinated because the rising steam may cause inflammation of the womb. Pregnant women are also advised not to bathe 515 in the stream, since *los aires* may endanger the baby and cause it to be born with 843 physical defects.[5] It is also said that bathing in the stream may cause the pregnant woman to fill up with water. Although pregnant women sometimes continue to [296] use the stream to wash clothes, this also is considered unwise. Some say that pregnant women should not bathe more than once a week for fear of catching cold, but many women bathe every three days in warm or cold water, according to preference.

---

843 759 1945. In Cherán, in 1940, the cost of delivery was from 1½ to 2½ pesos. See Ralph L. Beals, *Cherán, A Sierra Tarascan Village*, Institute of Social Anthropology Publ. No. 2 (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1946), p. 166.

465 171 [4] Foster describes the massage in Tzintzuntzan as "heavy pummeling" and attributes the many miscarriages to this.

[114] [5] Redfield's informant said, "After three months she [the pregnant woman] goes to the *barranca* [stream] to bathe. She may do this many times before the birth." According to our data, although some women do it, this is generally regarded as undesirable.

2:Lewis E-5 (1943-1948)1951 NU37 Tepoztlan NU37



847 *curanderos* in other villages to "cure" themselves. However, the only approved method of limiting the number of pregnancies is to avoid intercourse as long as
842 possible after the birth of a child.

### *BIRTH*

844 When the baby is expected, a curtain is hung to screen the bed of the expectant mother, and delivery takes place behind this. Poorer families hang up a *petate*. When labor pains begin, the midwife is called. Occasionally the husband will assist the wife, but the majority of women are embarrassed by his presence and insist that he leave. One of the underlying beliefs throughout the delivery is that difficulty is due to "cold" and that "heat" must be applied. The patient lies on a *petate* on the floor, and the midwife massages the abdomen, the back, and the hips, with various
[278] heated oils and unguents. These may be oil of violet, white lily, rosemary or al-
[784] monds, or *alcu*, depending upon the midwife. The heat and the massage is to warm the infant, loosen it, and make it slip out more easily.

[278] The patient is then given a mixture of *tlatlauhcameti* with chocolate, sherry, and egg, to make the labor pains stronger, or *pimienta gorda* is boiled and given. The abdomen is massaged and rubbed all the while, and the mother is wrapped in a blanket to make her perspire. A *cenidor*, or sash, may be tightly bound around the waist at this time to keep the back from weakening and the bones from spreading and to prevent hemorrhage later. The patient may kneel at this stage, and the baby is delivered on the *petate* and wrapped by the midwife in a clean, warmed, old cloth. If it is a dry birth, the mother is given more *tlatlauhcameti*. In cases of difficult
845 or delayed births, the family, at the suggestion of the midwife, may buy a candle for
782 the Virgen de Monserrat, the guardian of pregnant women. The patient measures four fingers on the candle, a mark is made at that point with a centavo, and the candle is put before the image. If delivery does not occur before the flame reaches the mark on the candle, the case is considered very grave.

845 Delayed births are sometimes attributed to the fact that the woman does not bear down at the proper time, and attempts are made to eject the child by provoking
[825] nausea and vomiting. This may be achieved by putting a chicken feather or the tail
[278] of an opossum into the woman's mouth.[10] The tail is sometimes cooked and given as a drink. The woman may also be given her husband's urine or the dirty soapy water in which he has washed his hands. It is believed that when a woman in labor breathes out or screams every time she feels pain, the child rises instead of descends. The mother is given something to bite on, usually her braid, and is told to keep her mouth closed. Even speaking is discouraged. It may be such practices, found in
[152] many parts of Mexico, which have led observers to describe Mexican Indian women as stoical during childbirth. In Tepoztlán, women frequently pray and scream when they suffer severe pains, and only the *más valientas* are quiet.

Difficult births and extended labor, sometimes over several days, are not uncom-

[171] [10] In Tzintzuntzan, the woman's braid is forced down her throat.

2:Lewis E-5 (1943-1948) 1951 NU37 Tepoztlan NU37



is "clean," that is, when bleeding stops. This sometimes occurs in the first week but more often in the second. After delivery it is obligatory to give the midwife something to eat as an expression of appreciation, but it is up to the family to decide what is given. Generally the midwife is offered chocolate or coffee and bread. Sometimes wine and cigarettes are also given. During and after the delivery, the midwife is not restricted in any way as to the food she may eat.[18]

The mother's milk generally flows after one or two days, sometimes even before the birth. If the milk does not appear by the second day, some midwives give the mother an *atole* of sesame seed, chick peas, chocolate, and cinnamon. Others give *necuatole* or *atole de alegría* made of ground corn, *chile pasilla*, *epazote*, and brown sugar. Another remedy is the penis of an ox, cut up and cooked. Sometimes the *flor de pascua* is boiled and taken by the mother. A few midwives place the baby at the mother's breast to stimulate the flow of milk. Many babies are nursed at another woman's breast until the mother's milk comes. During the day the wet nurse, usually a relative or a friend, comes to the child's house every three or four hours to nurse him. At night the child is taken to the wet nurse once or twice by the father or grandmother. There is no charge for the services of the wet nurse, but often the child's family sends her some meat to nourish her during this time. Some families are afraid to take a young infant out because of *los aires*, and it is fed cinnamon and water until the mother's milk begins to flow.

It is a common belief that the first milk is harmful to the infant and should be discarded. It is squeezed out and either thrown to the ground (this is called *motlaltoka*, burying the first milk), or it is thrown over the roof (*monokia*) to prevent the mother's milk from going away. It is also thought that squeezing out the first milk hastens the flow of the true milk. If the mother has no milk, it is considered a calamity because the cost of a regular wet nurse is prohibitive, and many children die when put on a diet of cow's milk. Canned milk is now used safely but the expense is a heavy burden for most families.

The amount of attention and care given to the new mother in Tepoztlán is striking. At no other time are women accorded so much service and time for rest. This care consists of a prolonged period in bed, freedom from household duties, taking sweatbaths, and abstention from sexual intercourse.

The prime motive underlying this postnatal care is to delay a new pregnancy as long as possible. It is believed that early resumption of sexual intercourse causes the back to weaken and the menstrual flow to begin, thus making conception more probable. Women say that extended rest from work and sexual intercourse can

[18] We could find nothing to support Redfield's statements that "The midwife is magician-priest rather than obstetrician; she eats the same food as her patient as long as their relation of intimacy is maintained during postnatal care . . . during the first week, the new mother and the midwife, who must eat the same food as her patient, observe food restrictions." *Ibid.*, pp. 134, 136. Our questions concerning this called forth the same response from informants in Mitla: that is, they laughed at the thought and denied that it occurred. It should be noted that Redfield's account of the above, as well as other aspects of pregnancy and birth, is based on the report of a single informant and probably represents an individual variation.

2:Lewis E-5 (1943-1948) 1951 NU37 Tepoztlan NU37

# 16 *infancy and early childhood:*

THERE IS MUCH variety in the treatment and care of infants and children in Tepoztlán because of individual differences and because of the presence of groups representing different cultural and economic levels. The most obvious contrasting practices in child care are those of the more acculturated families and those with only minimal contacts with the outside. The distinction between these two groups is not always clear-cut. Sometimes the mother represents one group and the father the other, reflecting the state of transition which pervades the village and complicates the discussion of customs in no small measure. Frequently there is no difference in customs as such, but rather in the practice of them.

## *INFANCY*

At the birth of a child there is no celebration, and generally little fuss is made. When the first-born is a son, there are usually expressions of pleasure on the part of the father and relatives. But many mothers describe the arrival of their children as causing "neither joy nor argument," and frequently complain of their husband's indifference at the birth of a child. Men do, in fact, maintain an attitude of reserve but often respond to a new arrival by working harder. More modern men do not conceal pleasure at the birth of a child, and behave much the way new fathers do in our society. Gifts are not traditionally given to the child, although some of the more acculturated do this and invite friends in to drink and to eat *mole*.

It is believed that the first weeks of life are dangerous, for the infant is particularly susceptible to the "evil eye," "bad humors," and *los aires*. Non-relatives are not encouraged to see a newborn child, though the more modern families permit it after a few days. Babies sleep behind a curtain and are protected from "bad humors" with *ruda* and chile which are placed in the form of a cross beneath the pillow or mattress of the cradle, and by a few drops of iodine on their clothing. Some families hang a gallstone, taken from the gall bladder of a bull, around the child's wrist to protect him from the "evil eye." This is no longer done in some of the better educated families. After one month, a centavo may be hung on a string around the child's neck to protect him from whooping cough. Some tie on a little

2:Lewis E-5 (1943-1948) 1951 NU37 Tepoztlan NU37



Infants are traditionally swaddled in a sheet or cotton blanket with the arms bound tightly at their sides during nursing and sleeping. It is said that this is done to prevent the sleeping child from waking himself with a sudden movement of the hands which might cause *espanto*. Swaddling also serves to prevent the child from touching his genitals and from touching the mother's breast during nursing, "for the breast is not a toy." Swaddling, however, is viewed primarily as an important part of child training.

There is a widespread belief, particularly among the older women, that swaddling and binding the arms of the child will prevent him from "turning out bad" when he is older. Binding is an effort to make children more passive and quiet. Many families in the smaller barrios tie the sleeping child's wrists and ankles to keep him from moving under the swaddling blanket. This is done up to the time he walks, in order to train him to sleep quietly, for there is a belief that a quiet sleep is a good sleep. As girls get older, they are trained to sleep quietly and modestly, with their legs together.

It is believed that children who are bound will not touch things, will not be active or demanding, and will be less trouble to the mother. When an older child is mischievous or overactive, it is said that his mother did not bind his arms long enough. Also, when an older boy attempts to embrace a girl she might say, "What, didn't they bind you when you were a child?" Older women say it is more effective to keep a child bound for one year, but most women today do it until the child no longer permits it, or from six to nine months, depending upon how active the child is. More acculturated mothers often bind their children for only three months "out of pity," much to the annoyance of their mothers-in-law. One grandmother complained that she must always be watching her two-year-old grandson because he touches everything and wants to keep moving about. She blamed this on the fact that his mother swaddled him for only three months. A few women do not swaddle their infants at all. Old women frequently comment that infants and children are much more active today than they were a generation ago.

During the day, babies sleep in a shallow wooden cradle which hangs from the ceiling by a rope. The sleeping baby's face is covered with a *rebozo* or cloth to protect him from *los aires* and to keep out light and flies. The swaddled child is safer in the cradle, since swaddling prevents movements which might cause him to fall over the low sides. As the child gets older and more active he must be tied in or watched constantly because of the danger of falling out. Most cradles can be raised, to safeguard the child from animals wandering into the house, or lowered to prevent a high fall. Babies may be rocked to sleep in the cradle, but most of the time they fall asleep in the mother's arms while nursing and are then placed in the cradle.

Babies sleep with their mothers at night, on a *petate* on the floor or on a *tepexco*. If the mother is accustomed to sleeping in a bed, the child will be heavily wrapped at night to prevent wetting the mattress. Cases of mothers smothering babies during sleep are not rare, and usually the mother is blamed for carelessness. An un

2:Lewis E-5 (1943-1948) 1951 NU37 Tepoztlan NU37



closes when touched, is sometimes placed under the child's pillow to make him stop crying and go to sleep. Sometimes the leaf of the *sapote blanco* may also be used. When a small child cries because he is *chincual*, or irritated in the rectum, the small berries of the *tohcuchichi*[4] are put into the rectum to stop the crying. If a child is restless and sleepless because of diarrhea, his abdomen and buttocks are rubbed with hot tallow, into which has been mixed the powdered flower of the *comparochid*, and then wrapped in a hot cloth.

Children are, for the most part, not hurried in their development. A healthy child is expected to walk at about one year and to talk at about two years. If the child does not walk by that time, some parents rub his leg and calf muscles with earth warmed by the sun, to remove the "cold" from his legs. More acculturated women may help their children learn to walk by placing a sash under the arms for support or by putting a toy before them. Children are only mildly encouraged to speak, by repeating words to them. There is little correction of childlike errors in speech, such as substituting "y" for "r" or omitting "s," or misplacing syllables, so that errors persist until the child is five or six years of age. If a child cannot speak by the time he is three or four, a church key may be borrowed and turned in the child's mouth to "unlock" it. It is believed by many that the fingernails of a child should not be cut until he begins to speak, because the palate will fall and the child will be mute. To prevent children from scratching themselves with their long nails, some mothers put little mittens on their hands. When teeth are late in coming, the gums may be rubbed with a grasshopper's leg until the gums bleed. This is an old practice and is no longer known by many of the younger people. It is also believed that a child's hair should not be cut before one year, or the child will become ill.

Most mothers prefer a quiet child to an active one and do not encourage children to be independent. It is considered careless and neglectful to permit children to crawl on the floor or in the dirt, and few mothers put their infants down for more than a moment. This attitude is in part due to the fact that children who crawl are more troublesome and need watching, and in part because there is usually no clean, safe place in which a child may crawl. Inside the house or in the patio there is always danger from insects and animals. Women point out that infants who are allowed to crawl about unobserved almost always suffer from chronic diarrhea, worms, and intestinal diseases. Mothers who have no one to help them often put their small children into a large box while they do their work. In the past a busy mother tied her child to a stake and let him play on a *petate*, but this is no longer done.

All infants in Tepoztlán are carried almost every waking moment up to the time they begin to walk. Children are carried a great deal even after they can walk and not infrequently until they are three and four years old. In Tepoztlán, children are not cradled or slung in the *rebozo*, as in some parts of Mexico, but are held in

[4] *Solanum nigrum.*

2:Lewis E-5 (1943-1948)1951 NU37 Tepoztlan NU37



862 the mother is pregnant, but many mothers do not wean the child until he shows definite symptoms of becoming ill. If weaning due to a new pregnancy occurs before two years, the mother and father are said to be inconsiderate of their infant. Weaning at one year sometimes occurs because the mother is ill or has insufficient milk. Although women frequently complain that they become thin and tired when they nurse, or that they receive painful bites, they rarely wean a child for these reasons. A few mothers regularly wean their children at eighteen months. Weaning [858] may be delayed in the case of a favorite child, to avoid making him cry.

One mother, who suffered from sore nipples, decided to wean her three-year-old son while her husband was away. When her husband came home that night he became angry and said that if the boy cried, the mother would receive a beating. Many people believe that the longer a child is nursed, the stronger he will be. It is not uncommon for the youngest and last child to be nursed as long as he wishes, sometimes for four or five years. Some believe, however, that after two years of nursing, the child begins to drink the mother's blood "like a bat," and that nursing a child too long will make him stupid.

When the mother decides to wean the child she places a bitter substance (*sávila*) on the nipple, often in the child's presence, and tells him that her breast is sore and that he may no longer nurse. Some mothers wean *por derecho*, that is by binding the breasts and not permitting the child to see them again. But many do not bind the breasts for several days, and if the child cries or begs hard he is given the breast so that he "will not be angry" with the mother. If the child continues to nurse despite the *sávila*, a more bitter substance (*prodigiosa*)[5] is applied. Today, [824] bicarbonate of soda, iodine, alcohol, etc., are also used. A child is considered difficult to wean if he continues to nurse despite the "medicines" applied. Crying, even if prolonged over eight days, is viewed as a normal part of weaning. In general, the younger the child the more difficult he is to wean. A delicate or sickly child may be treated more gently, by gradually reducing the number of nursings for eight or fifteen days before weaning is begun, but few women do this. Since so many children are nursed for at least two years, most of them are weaned in a few days. Few mothers consider weaning difficult.

Many women have a great deal of milk, and their breasts are painful during weaning. Some express the milk with their hands to relieve the pain, others cannot and must rely on binding. Hot alcohol is rubbed on the breasts and back, or heated [757] tortillas are placed on the breasts, to ease the pain. Another technique is to heat the *tejolate* (pestle) and rub the breast with it. It is believed that nursing should not be resumed once the breasts are bound because the milk changes and acts as a purgative. When milk is expressed, it is generally buried in the earth in a place [825] where the ants will not get to it so that the mother will have a good supply of milk for her next baby. Some women express the milk into a cloth and throw it over the roof for the same reason.

---

[5] *Colrosantus.*

2:Lewis E-5 (1943-1948) 1951 NU37 Tepoztlan NU37



Most families attempt to console the child during weaning. He generally receives more attention from his mother and continues to sleep with her. However, most mothers do not carry the child during weaning because of the pain in their breasts. The child is generally carried about by others in the family, is given little toys or goodies, and is taken visiting. The child starts to eat with the family, and this is often presented to him as a compensation for the loss of the mother's milk and usually serves to divert him. Occasionally, if a child is inconsolable and cries hard for a long time, particularly at night, the mother, or more usually the father, will lose patience and spank him hard and then frighten him into silence by telling him the coyote will come to eat him. Sometimes a child will be taken to sleep at his grandmother's house for a few nights.

Illness and death are frequent in children after weaning. Often the illness or death is attributed to indigestion or *ético* (tuberculosis?), in which the child wastes away. These are associated with the changed diet of the child at weaning, and it is highly probable that these children do not receive sufficient nourishment, or are given foods unsuited to the digestive systems of young children. Many women wean *con pura tortilla*, that is, with inadequate food substitutes. These children are shifted to the diet of the adult, which consists of tortilla, beans or bean soup, rice or noodles prepared with much lard or oil, and black coffee. In some families children of two are also permitted to eat chile and various local seeds which, whether toasted or raw, are difficult to digest. The best traditional method of feeding a weaned child is to give him an *atole* of ground corn cooked in milk, if the family can afford it, or in water, and sweetened with cinnamon and brown sugar. Many women say that children never become ill if given this food daily for one, two, or six months after weaning. Today better-to-do and more acculturated families wean with a daily diet of eggs, cereals, milk, soups made of chicken or meat, and vegetables and fruit, in addition to the traditional foods. Sometimes cooked meat and bread are given to a small child, even when the rest of the family cannot afford to eat them. This diet, however, is limited to very few children.

*Chipiles*, or jealousy, is an important childhood illness which begins when the mother of the child again becomes pregnant.[6] The world *chipil* (jealous) is derived from the Náhuatl *tzipitl* which means last or smallest one and refers to the jealousy of the youngest child toward the expected baby. It is believed that nursing children can tell from the taste of the pregnant mother's milk that a new child is coming, and the illness is due to the fact that they are now "carrying the weight of the baby," a euphemistic term for jealousy. Weaning is begun with the first display of symptoms. Children who are no longer being nursed but who still sleep with the mother are able to "sense" the coming of another child and may also become *chipil*. Young husbands are also subject to *chipiles* when their wives become pregnant for the first time. They also are "carrying the weight of the baby," since there is no other child to do so. The symptoms of *chipiles* are pain all over the

[6] This illness is well known in many parts of Mexico, including the large cities, but, to my knowledge, it has not been reported in anthropological literature.